



Pacific Southwest Book Club

Where the Water Goes by David Owen

6:30-7:30 PM PT on November 3, 2022

Meeting Schedule

Date	Chapters	Number of Pages
11/03/22	Chapter 7: Lees Ferry Chapter 8: Boulder Canyon Project Chapter 9: Las Vegas Chapter 10: Colorado River Aqueduct	55
11/17/22	Chapter 11: Central Arizona Project Chapter 12: The Rule of Capture Chapter 13: Boondocking Chapter 14: Imperial Valley	51
12/01/22	Chapter 15: The Salton Sea Chapter 16: Reclamation Chapter 17: The Delta Chapter 18: What Is to Be Done	75

Discussion Questions

Use these questions as a starting point or come up with your own questions. Join us on November 3rd, no matter where you are in the book. We want to hear your perspective!

Chapter 7: Lees Ferry

1. It is striking that John Wesley Powell saw so clearly—in 1893—that an irrigated west would ultimately exhaust available water resources:

“When all the rivers are used, when all the creeks in the ravines, when all the brooks, when all the springs are used, when all the reservoirs along the streams are used, when all the canyon waters are taken up, when all the artesian waters are taken up, when all the wells are sunk or dug that can be dug, there is still not sufficient water to irrigate all this arid region...I tell you, gentlemen, that you are piling up a heritage of conflict and litigation over water rights, for there is not sufficient water to supply these arid lands” (88).

Apart from boeing (as Owen reports it), how did the International Irrigation Congress answer Powell’s claim that the ICC’s vision to irrigate an arid region was unsustainable? Who are our visionaries today?

2. As a “dam-controlled waterway,” the Colorado no longer has “free flows [that] purge the river corridor and tear out the non-native, noxious weeds” (90-91).

How do we assess the trade-offs between recreational uses inevitably at odds with fully functioning ecosystems? Is there sufficient water in the Colorado River to support either in the long run?

Chapter 8: Boulder Canyon Project

1. The story of the construction of Hoover Dam (97-103) is as harrowing as the dam is spectacular. As Owen observes, “If anything resembling modern labor laws had been in effect, Six Companies could have been prosecuted as a criminal enterprise” (98).

What do we make of the fact that brutally exploitative labor practices built our country’s most iconic dam?

2. Owen notes that lower water levels are causing electricity production at Hoover Dam, Glen Canyon Dam, and others to plunge. Is hydroelectric power green? Is it sustainable?

Chapter 9: Las Vegas

1. Conservation, water efficiency goals, and inaccurate assumptions can result in some profound paradoxes which this chapter reveals. In the very beginning, one of the most common and yet utterly incorrect assumptions about Las Vegas is discussed. What do many people assume incorrectly about Las Vegas and its “water relationship” with Lake Mead?
2. It turns out that Las Vegas paradoxically has an abundance of “unwanted” groundwater! What is the source of this “perched” water and what makes disposing of this water such a tricky operation?
3. Xeriscaping, irrigation, and salinity—from Mesopotamia to the Hohokam to modern times, is long term irrigation EVER sustainable?

Chapter 10: Colorado River Aqueduct

1. Why does Parker Dam exist? Who is credited with being the driving force for its construction?
2. Look at this map of the Colorado River Aqueduct on the next page. What is the process for getting water across the desert and over the mountains? How energy intensive is this process?



Etcetera

1. How does the Colorado River or the water theme fit into the movies you watch? We've started a list of water movies on [IMDb](#). Here's a great 10-minute video that ties into the chapters we just read, [Bitter Water](#). Check it out!
2. There's a really cool resource that was added to the Wakelet called [River Runner](#) where you can trace a drop of water through a watershed.
3. If you haven't sent a song, article, or movie, or have more to share, send your favorite river title to me at dharrington@marinesanctuary.org and I'll add it to our book club [Wakelet](#).